



## National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Public Involvement

The National Environmental Policy Act outlines the required environmental planning process that the National Park Service (NPS) must follow to ensure informed decision-making. This law has been described as the most important and far reaching environmental and conservation measure ever enacted by Congress. *NEPA also requires that the public be involved and informed in a diligent way throughout the planning process.* The Council on Environmental Quality provides regulations for the implementation of NEPA. The NPS has specific guidelines on how these regulations apply to NPS units through Director's Order 12: Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis and Decision Making.

### ***10-Step Environmental Planning Process: Development of a White-tailed Deer Management Plan at Valley Forge NHP***

- 1. Identify Purpose, Need, and Objectives:** Purpose describes what the NPS must accomplish to consider a management strategy a success. Need describes the condition or problem that must be addressed by the plan and answers the question "Why must we take action?" Objectives are specific statements of the plan purpose.
- 2. Identify Issues:** Issues are environmental, social, and economic problems or effects that may occur if the deer management alternatives are implemented or if current management continues (no action).
- 3. Determine the Appropriate Path for Plan Development:** The NPS has determined that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is the appropriate pathway for development of a White-tailed Deer Management Plan at Valley Forge NHP based on criteria established through NEPA.
- 4. Identify Alternatives for Management and Conduct Public Scoping:** The NPS must create a full range of deer management alternatives that resolve purpose and need for taking action and meet the specific objectives of the plan. *Scoping provides the public an opportunity to express their views on the purpose, need, context, and preliminary management alternatives related to deer management.*
- 5. Bound the Analysis:** For each park resource potentially affected by deer management alternatives, a boundary in time and space will be identified. The impacts of management alternatives on each resource will be analyzed within the context of these boundaries.
- 6. Describe the Affected Environment:** Affected environment refers to the various resources (e.g. vegetation, wildlife) that are expected to experience environmental effects from implementation of deer management alternatives.
- 7. Analyze the Impacts of Alternatives:** Impact analysis predicts the degree to which resources will be affected by each deer management alternative.
- 8. Revise Alternatives:** Based on the results of impact analysis, deer management alternatives may be eliminated, added, or revised to better meet objectives and resolve resource issues and concerns.
- 9. Document Review and Revision:** *The Draft White-tailed Deer Management Plan/EIS will be released for internal and public review.* The plan will be revised and finalized based on comments received.
- 10. Decision:** The decision on a preferred deer management alternative to be implemented at Valley Forge NHP is made by the NPS Regional Director.